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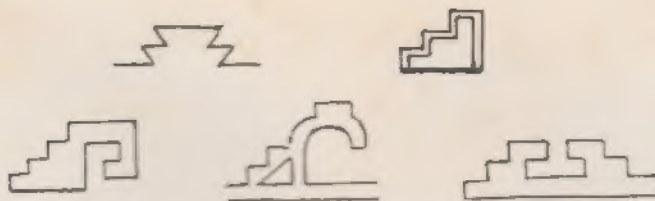
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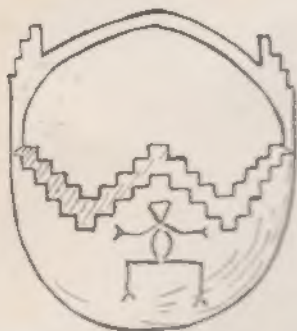
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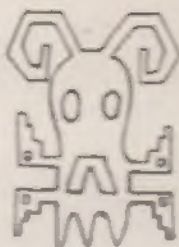
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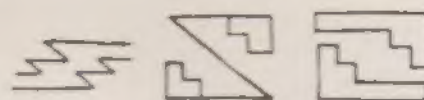
2 FORMS OF EARTH SYMBOL



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8 THE TWINS



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THE LIGHT SYMBOL (Three examples)





## SYMBOLISM IN PERUVIAN ART

THE more one studies the artistic crafts of primitive Man the more one realizes how important a part in his daily life was played by symbolism. In Peru perhaps more than in any other area of archaic civilization was this the case; for, as far as we at present know, the proto-Peruvians possessed no system of writing, either hieroglyphic or otherwise. And yet we are forced to conclude that they *must* have possessed at least some easily understood ideographs or symbols for important concepts.

The *quipus*, the system of knotted strings, could scarcely be considered adequate to meet the needs of a people whose remains prove them possessed of intelligence of no mean order. The function of the *quipus*, when not merely a tally of numbers, was, it would seem, mnemonic; although it is quite possible that it was also symbolic, for the cords of diverse colours may have represented ideas or even words. The Spanish missionary José d'Acosta informs us that the old men of his time were able to represent articulate sounds by arranging pebbles of various colors on the ground. In time we may fathom the mystery of the *quipus* and learn to read the meaning of the strange figures and signs which form the burden of Peruvian decorative art.

What future research may bring to light in this direction we cannot estimate. It is practically a virgin field and the labourers are few. In the present instance all that is attempted is a little spade work,—the gathering together of a few evidences of the rich ores still in the vein.

To begin with it may be postulated that practically all the art motives of all ages or periods must be considered as conventionalized symbology. The decorative art of the Peruvians, like that of all other primitive peoples, was bound up inseparably with their religious beliefs. And it is probable that religious feeling occupied their minds so completely that the decoration even of their ordinary garments, utensils and ornaments were all, as it were, materialized prayers.

In considering the symbolism of ancient Peru we must not forget that, as far as we at present know, we are here in touch with a purely indigenous art,—the result of ages of development in complete isolation from foreign, disturbing elements.

The dawn of civilization in Peru is now generally allowed to have taken place at an epoch coëval with the early-Mayan period of Guatemala and Honduras, at some indeterminate time prior to 200 A. D.



But in Peru there are evidences of an earlier race than those which have left us the cyclopean ruins of Tiahuanaco or the wonderful pots of proto-Nasca or proto-Chimu cultures. Notably was this the case at Ancon, where there exist extensive "middens" of an ancient population of fisherfolk.

It was among the remains of this primitive race that the fragment of pottery shown in figure 1 was found. A mere shard of clay it has hitherto attracted no notice and would have little interest for us now except that upon it is incised the figure of a stepped pedestal. As one of the most frequently occurring motives in Peruvian art it is worthy of mention, but over and above this the figure has been shown, (*a propos* of later examples), to be ideographic. It is the Earth-symbol,—“The Earth” as expressed by the Aymara word *Pacha*. Posnansky gives it as his opinion that this sign originated in Tiahuanaco and thence spread to other parts. But in view of the evidence presented by the fragment referred to it would seem that its origin must be sought elsewhere. It is certainly more ancient than Tiahuanaco.

A glance at figure 2 will give an idea of a few of the more rudimentary forms in which this symbol occurs,—examples given by Posnansky before the Congress of Americanists. That the Peruvians should thus have conceived of the Earth as a series of steps rising to the regions of the sky-gods is not exceptional. A similar idea obtained in Mexico where the figure is found on monuments of the Aztec and Toltec races. It is found, too, in Yucatan, on the ruins of Uxmal and Chichen-Itza, and on the monuments of Central America, (Copan, etc.). It is closely paralleled in modern times among the Zunis and other nations of ancient stock. Speaking of the Prayer-Meal bowl, (figure 3), Cushing reports the Zuni Sun-priest as saying,—“Is not the bowl then emblem of the Earth, our Mother? For from her we draw both food and drink, as a babe draws nourishment from the breast of its mother; and round as is the rim of the bowl, so is the horizon, terraced with mountains whence rise the clouds.”

We have here then a symbol of anthropocentric origin,— an ideograph translatable as *pacha*, the Earth: and, occurring as often as it does upon ancient pots, textiles, etc. we must believe that it was used as a symbol and not merely as an ornament. On objects of later age it naturally tends to become a convention, but even so its use may still be regarded as significant, much as to the Christian the employment of the cross is always of sacred import.



We find the same sign again forming part of the quaint figure illustrated in figure 4. This, the symbol of Fecundity, an interesting conception occurring on tapestries from Ancon, represents the mythic Bee, winged with the symbol of the fallow earth. The step-form, when associated, (as in this case), with the square or circle within the field formed by its shape, may, I believe, be regarded as ideographic of *Pachamama*, the Earth-mother, as differentiated from *Pachacamay*, the Great Spirit of the Earth. Our own common expression "Mother Earth" is a survival of a similar conception.

As the stepped-pedestal symbolized the earth, so by the simple process of inversion, the same figure is believed to have expressed the conception of the celestial spaces. Thus Posnansky explains the not infrequent conjunction of the figures such as are shown in figure 5,—typifying the heavens and the earth.

At times one finds these symbols in conjunction with the Thunder-bird, (figure 6), the disseminator of death, epidemic and famine,—typical perhaps of Nature in its threatening aspect.

The Thunder-bird is to be seen perched upon the sceptre of the Creator God of the great gateway at Tiahuanaco and there symbolises the God's power over the Thunder. But the Thunder-God himself held a high place in the Peruvian hierarchy and was worshipped in non-Incan times under various names. In Incan times he was a composite deity,—a fusion of several local types. It was not fear of his death-dealing powers that gave him his position. He was revered rather in his beneficent aspect as the bringer of rain,—so essential to the crops. Figure 7 depicts him as he is seen upon a tapestry panel of late pre-Incan technique from Ancon, now at Paris. Here he is represented in human form, with a masked headdress, representing the clouds which ever veiled his head. In one hand he holds the wand which causes the thunder. On the other is perched the Thunder-bird ready to fly off at the motion of the wand. Beneath, and between the supporting figures, is seen the Thunder-vase, (*Contici*), at the shattering of which the welcome rain descends. It is more than probable that the supporters represent the twin brothers Apocatequil and Piguero, sons of the First Man, Guamansuri. They certainly had some affinity with the Thunder and because of that all twin children in Peru were sacred to the Thunder-God.

That this is the myth illustrated by the tapestry panel is so very obvious that it is strange it has never been noticed before. Hamy con-



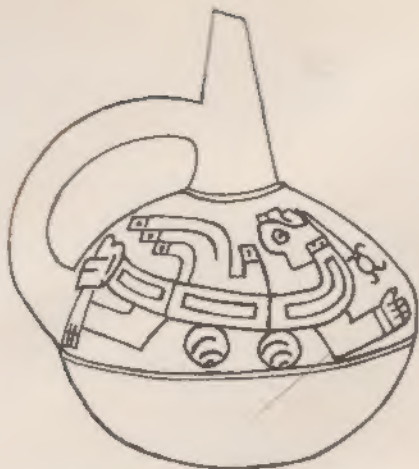
tented himself with describing it as a chief "défilant porté sur un pavoi au milieu d'un imposant cortège."

The twins above referred to were credited with having released the progenitors of the Peruvians from the earth by turning up the soil with an implement of gold. Figure 8, from a piece of fabric in the Pennsylvania Museum, shows them at their task, as also does another piece found with it at Pachacamac by Dr. Uhle. In referring to them, in his fine monograph on that site he tells us, "no interpretation can be attempted until the ancient customs shall be better known." We venture to suggest that this difficulty is now removed.

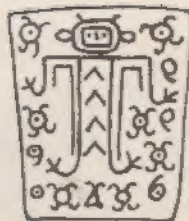
A symbol of much interest is that outlined in figure 9,—a form that occurs frequently on objects of later periods. In its earlier form, (figure 10), it occurs on tapestries of "Epigonal" age from Pachacamac in Pennsylvania Museum. The same in a more conventionalized form, (figure 11), is found on a fragment of tapestry, late pre-Incan, from Ancon, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. There is no doubt that this figure is the same as that which hangs from the beak of the mythic Condor, (figure 12), on a pot of the Tiahuanaco II style in the Pennsylvania Museum and on a specimen from Ancon illustrated by Reiss and Stübel and Baessler. Again there is no doubt that this sign is ideomatic, for on many of the curious "grave-tablets" from the tombs it is a significant element. An example from Ancon is shown in figure 13.

In its later forms this symbol has been considered as typifying the four winds, but I am convinced that it has a more vital application than this. I believe it to express the idea of Light and Life in the same way as the Maya glyph *ik*, of somewhat similar form, represents Spirit, Breath or Soul. The identical symbol is found in conjunction with the God of the North Star, (God C), in the Codex *Tro-Cortesianus*, (figure 14), and on incense-burners in the Dresden Codex, (figure 15). Seler, (in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, XLII), describes it as denoting "fire" and gives it the name "*kak*". But it would seem that figure 12 obviously illustrates the Peruvian myth of the origin of Light,—that it was carried to earth in the beaks of birds. A similar myth obtained among the Chibchas of Colombia and may possibly point to cultural affinity between the early Colombians and the founders of the empire at Tiahuanaco.

Only on articles of non-Incan origin do we find the symbol in its simple form. In the later period it is often quite conventionalized.



12 THE ORIGIN OF LIGHT ON A  
TIAHUANACO II POT



13 GRAVE-TABLET, ANCON



14 GOD OF THE NORTH STAR



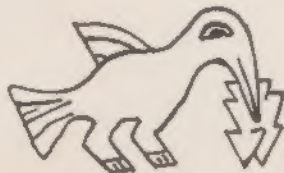
15 INCENSE BURNER



16 A POT FROM RECUAY



17 A POT FROM ANCON 18 GOLD IMAGE OF THE ORIGIN OF LIGHT



19 SYMBOL ON BREAST  
OF CREATOR-GOD



20 SYMBOL ON PEDESTAL OF THE CREATOR-GOD



Sometimes the "arms" are elaborated with birds' heads or the centre made into a face by the addition of features. Thus it becomes identified with the Sun, which is after all the normal metamorphosis of the earlier idea by the Incas, who invariably absorbed and modified rather than exterminated the cults of conquered races. In further illustration of this idea we show, (figure 16), a pot from Recuay with the sun-like face having rays curved in just the same way and another from Ancon with the rays of light of conventional lightning-form, tipped with barbs, (figure 17). Here again we find a key to the meaning of a bird of gold figured by Weiner, a later method of portraying the myth of the origin of Light, (figure 18).

For the most part Peruvian art utilizes pure symbolism as the basis of its motives. But where we have more elaborate compositions, as on the great gateway of Tiahuanaco, it still tells the story in stylistic symbol. This monolith is quite the most widely known and interesting monument in Peru. Various attempts have been made to explain its meaning with but little success. But in the light of our enquiries as set forth above we may perhaps attempt an interpretation.

The dominating personality of this "Dweller in High Places", flanked on either hand by rows of genuflecting worshippers is obvious. His countenance is surrounded by rays which have led some to name him as the Sun-god. But the Sun in non-Incan religion held secondary place,—or rather was simply an *avatar* of the mighty Creator, Con, ruler of the heavens, the earth and the elements,—Lord of Mankind. He it is we see here standing upon the stepped Earth-symbol which is embellished with Condor's heads. These give the allusion more point for the Condor symbolised in a special manner its home, the Andes. The Puma, or Jaguar, was sacred to the Creator and we see its heads terminating the rays around his head and the bands of his garments. His power over the elements, symbolised by the Thunder-bird and Lightning bolts held in his hands, has been referred to. But the chief symbol is undoubtedly the emblem upon his breast, which gives the key to the meaning of the whole. This is a combination of the Light-symbol and the sign of the Harvest month, (figure 19).

Here then we have the Creator-god in his effulgence benevolently ruling the elements at the culminating season of plenty,—the Harvest month,—when man reaps the full benefit of his grace. Tears fall from the great god's eyes,—the welcome rain so essential for the crops,—and also from the eyes of the faces of his avatar the Rain-god in the



meander frieze beneath the carving. The three tiers of kneeling figures in ceremonial raiment, ministers of his power, are ranged as it were before his throne. On the pedestal is a symbol of much interest whose meaning is obscure (figure 20). The sign of the Harvest month here occurs again within a rectangular figure surrounded by radiating bands. Tentatively it may be suggested that it typifies the fruitful womb of the Earth-mother whose productiveness blesses the children of earth, (the descending bands with Condor heads), and ascends before the feet of the Creator, (the upward bands with Puma heads).

That the foregoing is, at best, a very small beginning must be admitted. It does not pretend to be more than a tentative pointing of the way towards recognition of the vital symbolism that dominates Peruvian art. But if it awakens an interest in the subject its full purpose will have been served.

*Bayard G. Bunt*

<sup>9</sup> LONDON

## CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE PAINTING

### PART ONE

**I**N the West knowledge and admiration of Chinese art in all its forms have to a remarkable degree increased within the last twenty years; nevertheless a complete appreciation of Chinese painting is still not infrequently hampered by various misconceptions concerning those characteristics which so radically differentiate it from our own painting. As the Chinese look at both life and art from a highly original point of view, many westerners fail to realise precisely what the great Chinese painters wished to accomplish and what they deliberately neglected to attempt. A statement, however summary, of the aims and principles of Chinese painting may, therefore, not be without its use.

The fact that the painters of the Orient and those of the Occident have belonged to classes socially and intellectually different has caused one of the most fundamental divergencies between the art of the East and that of the West. In the Occident, at least until a very recent peri-